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Testimony of the Association of Connecticut Lobbyists Regarding House Bill 5403, *An Act Concerning Revisions to the Code of Ethics* Joint Committee on Government Administration and Elections March 8, 2010

Distinguished members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee, on behalf of the over 170 members of the ACL, we submit the following comments on House Bill 5403, *Act Concerning Revisions to the Code of Ethics*. From the outset we'd like to convey our appreciation to the Office of State Ethics, under the direction of Carol Carson, for advancing this important piece of legislation and to the leadership of the GAE Committee for their willingness to raise this bill again this year.

As many of you recall, much of the substance of the bill before you today mirrors a bill raised last session that wasn't adopted. After the bill's JF last session, a group of concerned lobbyists met several times with Executive Director Carson and members of her legal team to try to reach consensus on the definition of a lobbyist. What you have before you today in Section 19(a)(1), starting on line 872 represents an improvement over the harmfully vague phrase "incidental to" and requires an individual to be registered to lobby if their work is "within the scope" of his/her employment. Notwithstanding the improved language, the lobbyist community's firm belief is that an individual should be registered to lobby ONLY if they are paid to lobby, i.e. a contract lobbyist, an in-house lobbyist or government relations specialist. Those individuals who are not paid to lobby are simply exercising their First Amendment Right "to petition the Government for a redress of grievances" and should therefore be considered volunteers. Recognizing the political environment that we all operate in is not a perfect world, this bill's amended definition is generally considered to be an improvement.

Finally, we support the proposed increase in the dollar threshold that triggers an individual's registration as a lobbyist from its current level of \$2,000 to \$3,000 in Section 16, starting on line 748. Thank you very much for your consideration.